

Amendments to the Claims:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1 to 24 (canceled).

Claim 25 (new). A method for managing and monitoring an operation of a plurality of distributed hardware and/or software systems that are integrated into at least one communications network, the method which comprises:

with a central program means stored in a data processing device, processing system-related data that are present in the data processing device or are received by the data processing device via a communications network;

autonomously deriving operation-related decisions from the data;

based on the decisions, generating decision-specific control data for influencing the operation of one or more hardware and/or software systems; and

transmitting the control data, via the communications network, to data processing devices assigned to the respective hardware and/or software systems.

Claim 26 (new). The method according to claim 25, wherein the central program means accesses at least one set of data stored in the data processing device and selected from the group consisting of rule data, performance data, grouping data, classification data, and availability data.

Claim 27 (new). The method according to claim 26, wherein the rule data comprise

rules regarding priorities and/or sequences and/or logical and/or temporal relationships, and the performance data relate to a current operational load and/or a temporally restricted and/or dynamic and/or periodically needed capacity requirement.

Claim 28 (new). The method according to claim 25, wherein the system-related data are selected from the group consisting of operating plans, information regarding operating states of individual systems, and operator's wishes having been input at a central and/or individual system level using an input device.

Claim 29 (new). The method according to claim 25, wherein the operating plans regulate run times and availability of individual hardware and/or software systems, and the information regarding the operating state of individual systems relate to a current and/or future and/or periodic workload.

Claim 30 (new). The method according to claim 29, which comprises receiving, with the central data processing device, the information regarding the operating state of individual systems in an active and/or passive manner.

Claim 31 (new). The method according to claim 29, wherein the information relates to hardware selected from the group of clients, servers, networks, and storage systems, and/or to software selected from the group of applications, distributed applications having services that are dependent on one another, distributed application systems having virtualized services that are dependent on one another

and/or independent of one another, and/or databases, and/or front ends.

Claim 32 (new). The method according to claim 25, wherein the control data are configured to control at least one operation selected from the group consisting of starting, stopping, and adding services, moving services, moving applications, and maintenance of a distributed hardware and/or software system.

Claim 33 (new). The method according to claim 25, wherein the operation-related decisions include determining administrative tasks and/or chains of tasks.

Claim 34 (new). The method according to claim 33, which comprises, with the central program means, autonomously separating administrative tasks and/or chains of tasks into subtasks taking into account logical and/or temporal relationships and/or dynamic influences and/or availability data and/or priorities and/or grouping data and/or classification data and/or application data that are present in the data processing device.

Claim 35 (new). The method according to claim 33, which comprises, with the central program means, autonomously separating administrative tasks and/or chains of tasks into subtasks for moving and/or replacing application entities.

Claim 36 (new). The method according to claim 33, which comprises checking, with the central program means, a temporal progression of the administrative tasks and/or chains of tasks that are transmitted to the individual hardware and/or

software systems in the form of control data.

Claim 37 (new). The method according to claim 36, which comprises configuring the central program means to check continuously and/or at particular intervals of time.

Claim 38 (new). The method according to claim 25, which comprises assigning at least some of the distributed hardware and/or software systems their own autonomous program means that are stored in data processing devices in the form of autonomous agents that are subordinate to the central program means.

Claim 39 (new). The method according to claim 38, which comprises accessing, with the autonomous agent of an individual hardware and/or software system, rule data that are prescribed at the system level in the data processing devices.

Claim 40 (new). The method according to claim 39, wherein the rule data prescribed at the system level in the data processing devices comprise rules for the individual system and/or the interaction with the central autonomous program means.

Claim 41 (new). The method according to claim 39, which comprises interchanging control and/or rule data via the communications networks between the central program means and the autonomous agents of the individual hardware and/or software systems.

Claim 42 (new). The method according to claim 39, which comprises, with the central program means, selectively granting decision-making powers to the autonomous agents of the individual systems, and withdrawing the decision-making powers, using the communications networks.

Claim 43 (new). The method according to claim 39, which comprises granting and withdrawing the decision-making powers permanently, temporally restricted, or dynamically.

Claim 44 (new). The method according to claim 39, wherein the autonomous agents of the individual hardware and/or software systems respectively transmit general and/or system-specific control data to the data processing device of the central program means via a communications network and/or publish the data in generally accessible file systems and/or collaborate in a separation of administrative tasks and/or chains of tasks into subtasks.

Claim 45 (new). The method according to claim 25, which comprises operating the central program means in different operating modes.

Claim 46 (new). The method according to claim 45, which comprises operating the central program means in at least one operating mode selected from the group consisting of fully autonomous mode, partially autonomous mode, and with different reaction speeds.

Claim 47 (new). The method according to claim 45, which comprises operating the central program means in partially autonomous mode and changing and/or interrupting the partially autonomous mode with a manual input on an input device by an authorized administrator.

Claim 48 (new). The method according to claim 45, which comprises operating the central program means in partially autonomous mode and changing and/or interrupting the partially autonomous mode by the autonomous agents of the individual systems.

Claim 49 (new). The method according to claim 25, wherein the central program means includes a notification component, and the notification component outputs information regarding substeps of the work of the central program means and/or the processing state thereof via an output device.

Claim 50 (new). The method according to claim 25, wherein the distributed hardware and/or software systems comprise at least one application system.

Claim 51 (new). The method according to claim 50, wherein the at least one application system comprises a plurality of entities each controlling at least one service.

Claim 52 (new). The method according to claim 51, wherein the at least one

service is selected from the group of interactive mode, batch mode, accounting services, printing services, messaging services, and network services.

Claim 53 (new). The method according to claims 51, wherein a plurality of application systems cooperate in a system family.

Claim 54 (new). The method according to claim 50, which comprises operating the at least one application system in a virtual environment without fixed hardware assignment.

Claim 55 (new). The method according to claim 25, wherein the distributed hardware and/or software systems comprise client/server systems and/or operating systems.

Claim 56 (new). A system for managing and monitoring an operation of a plurality of distributed systems selected from the group consisting of hardware systems and software systems integrated into at least one communications network, the system comprising:

a data processing device, and at least one of a central autonomous program means stored in said data processing device and autonomous agents, stored in data processing devices, for individual hardware and/or software systems and/or input and/or output devices at a central system level and/or an individual system level, and configured to carry out the method according to claim 25.